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SOME RECENT TENDENCIES IN LATIN SYNTAX*

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One who has carefully examined the Latin grammars which have appeared with so great frequency during the last decade or two, and the successive editions of the older manuals, must have been impressed with the fact that Latin syntax is not standing still; and this impression is heightened if one has also followed the scientific treatises and monographs on that subject.

Yet the new views, and the new terminology that accompanies them, are surprisingly slow in making their way into the schools, or at least in establishing themselves there; and it is no uncommon thing for the college professor to hear from students fresh from preparatory schools in which the newest grammars are in use, that “*cum* with the imperfect and pluperfect tenses always takes the subjunctive,” that “*antequam* and *priusquam* have in narration the same construction as *cum*,” or that “*dum* meaning ‘while’ takes the indicative, meaning ‘until’ takes the subjunctive.”

That the teachers themselves are conservative and dislike innovations is shown by the fact that the last edition of Harkness’ *Grammar* could not for a long time displace the previous “Standard” edition, if indeed it has already done so, and that the scholarly handbook of Professors Hale and Buck is making its way but slowly, if I am correctly informed. A notable exception was Bennett’s *Grammar*, which achieved rapid and lasting popularity, in spite of

* Read at the Classical Conference at Ann Arbor, Mich., March 30, 1906.

its many novelties in terminology and in the treatment of the syntax. I am inclined to attribute this, without in the least detracting from the merits of the book, to the fact that there was a real demand for a brief and concise grammar.

But even among those who used Bennett's *Grammar* his terminology was taken up but slowly, and he has been compelled to make a complete series of school textbooks to secure a completely uniform presentation of his ideas on the subject. I think I do not exaggerate when I say that I have rarely, if ever, known a freshman who could distinguish an "ablative of attendant circumstances" from an "ablative of manner," obvious as the difference really is; and though I teach freshmen who use grammars which employ that terminology, "volitive" and "jussive" are words which seldom fall upon my ear. In fact, the majority of my students, though I know that they have not, might have been brought up on the grammars of twenty years ago, so far as one may judge from their answers to questions in syntax.

I am inclined to attribute this—and my belief is strengthened by some experience in classes composed of teachers, which I have met in summer schools—to the fact that few teachers have a thorough grasp of the new grammar, and that this is due to the lack of a foundation of general grammatical knowledge.

If I am right in what I have said, a popular review of some of the new developments and tendencies in Latin syntax may not be without interest to a gathering of teachers. It may be profitable as well, for it seems to me most unfortunate that any teacher's knowledge of grammar should be derived from one or from a few books. Unless his grammatical equipment is very mechanical and stereotyped, he should be able to use any grammar after having a short time to look it through. He may prefer this or that book for use with his classes, but it should not be in the least embarrassing if he should suddenly be transferred to a school in which a different manual was in use. To one, for example, who has a general knowledge of the uses of the dative case it should make no difference whether the treatment of that case begins with the "dative of the indirect object," as is usually the case, or with the "dative of tendency or purpose," as in Hale-Buck. Still less should the varying terms "tendency," "service," or "purpose" trouble him. He may believe in one name

or the other, or in one or the other order of development, but he should be able to understand the point of view of the advocate of either.

In grammar, as in every line of work, the teacher should have two different qualifications for his work: first, a broad and thorough knowledge of the principles of Latin grammar; second, the good sense and good judgment to use this knowledge to the best advantage of the grade of students which he is called upon to instruct. The literature of the subject is so extensive that the foundation of the first must be laid in graduate work. The latter is in part the result of experience and in part a gift of the Creator. Such a teacher will not allow his pupils to acquire a mechanical mastery of rules, but will force them to think—which is above all what our students of all grades need to learn.

Those who treat Latin syntax are divided into two schools, both in this country and abroad, on two important details. There are those who base their work upon comparative grammar, and seek to trace back the uses of the cases and of the moods and tenses to one or two fundamental meanings; and those who believe that the facts of usage, as we have them in historical Latin, represent a tendency toward centralization and uniformity, and that the primitive language from which the Indo-European tongues were derived was in many respects more complex, rather than more simple, than its offspring. The latter accordingly devote their study to the Latin language itself, as it has come down to us in literature and in inscriptions, with little or no reference to pre-historic and pre-literary conditions.

The latter school is less well known to teachers, since it is not represented as yet by a school grammar. Its leading exponent in this country is Professor Morris, who has set forth his views in a noteworthy book, *On Principles and Methods in Latin Syntax* (New York and London, 1902), one of the volumes of the Yale Bicentennial Publications, as well as in a series of papers on "The Subjunctive in Plautus," in Vol. XVIII of the *American Journal of Philology*. His influence is also seen in the work of his pupils, especially that of Professor A. L. Wheeler, of Bryn Mawr, and Professor Nutting, of the University of California.

These two schools of syntacticians differ also on another fundamental point—namely, whether the treatment of Latin grammar should be functional (or logical) or formal. The difference between the two systems may be illustrated fairly well by the treatment of conditional sentences. That in most of our school grammars is functional or logical, and differs essentially in different books. As I have already discussed this subject in some detail in the *Latin Leaflet*,¹ I need not do so here, especially since all the current classifications, as well as my own, were torn to pieces by Professor Harrington at the last meeting of the American Philological Association, and a brand-new one set forth, which I presume will appear in the next volume of the *Proceedings*. A formal classification, based on the mood and tense of the verbs of the condition and conclusion, is given in Lane's *Grammar*, and comprises over fifty classes. Yet this is not a complete formal classification, as Professor Morris points out, since the person and number of the verbs, their meanings, the presence and absence of adverbs, and other factors, are not taken into account.

Conditional sentences also show the relation of functional and formal classification to instruction in school and college, and to the investigation of syntactical phenomena. As Professor Morris says: "A complete and detailed presentation of all the forms of conditional sentences would be intolerably long and complex as a means of making a student acquainted with the facts." On the other hand, one who proposed to make a scientific study of conditional sentences in a given author, or in a given period, would unquestionably examine and reject all the classifications of our school grammars, and, I venture to predict, Professor Harrington's as well, and base his conclusions on a formal arrangement. Furthermore, it is altogether probable that a careful study of the conditional sentence from this point of view, or a series of studies covering the period of the classical literature, would greatly aid the makers of grammars in arriving at a simple and satisfactory classification for school purposes.

On this second point of difference the lines are really not so sharply drawn as on the first. Just as the allopathic, or so-called "regular," school of physicians have been influenced by the homœopathists,

¹ Vol. V (1905), No. 116.

without formally acknowledging it, to the extent of substituting tablets of various kinds for the huge and nauseous doses of our forefathers, so the conservative grammarians have long since taken up some of the ideas of the newer school, and are more and more inclined to do so. I can remember when the term "subjunctive of desire," in the usage of the schoolroom at least, covered practically all the various subdivisions of the "volitive," and when we never dreamed of connecting uses in subordinate clauses with the independent subjunctive. The first step in the direction of differentiation was the introduction of the hortatory subjunctive for the use of the "subjunctive of desire" in the first person plural; and I remember how hard it was to accustom ourselves to the innovation. The divisions of the volitive are largely made on the basis of person and number or of tense, while in the fuller classification of the so-called potential subjunctive the meanings of the verbs play an important part. An interesting instance of the application of one of the principles of formal syntax to the work of beginners is the excellent suggestion of Professor Hale,¹ that the imperfect indicative, when first introduced into exercises for translation, should be accompanied by an adverb of past time and by a contrasting present. Many other examples might be cited, if it were necessary.

That the classification by function is not satisfactory is shown by the successive editions of our older grammars, and by our new grammars, in the multiplication of categories. In my school days we had the very simple rule that "cause, manner, and means are denoted by the ablative." It may have been mentioned somewhere in a note that the ablative of manner usually had the preposition *cum*, but, if so, we paid no attention to it, and that interesting fact came to us in due time as something of a shock. In fact, we rather ignored the constructions with prepositions, the circumstance that a given case was governed by a given preposition being quite satisfactory to us. Only quite recently is the connection of these constructions with those of the simple cases being formally recognized, and in this respect the Hale-Buck *Grammar* marks an advance. But nowadays cause, manner, and means (or instrument) each has its separate rule, and to these are added an ablative denoting

¹ *Classical Journal*, Vol. I, No. 1.

that in accordance with which anything is done, and an ablative of attendant circumstances. Professor Bennett feels the need of still another ablative, that of association, for which he recently presented a plea before the American Philological Association.

Another new term is the "dative of separation," a construction which certainly did not logically belong where it was formerly put, namely as a note under the dative with verbs compounded with prepositions. Some scholars object to this term, though I do not know that anyone has put his objections into printed form. There is really no more objection to the term than to that of "dative of agent" or "dative of possessor." The dative does not, of course, denote separation, but no more does it denote agency or possession. All three belong to the general category of dative of reference, and "dative of separation" is quite as accurate a designation as "dative of agent." Some grammarians prefer to speak of the "dative of the apparent agent," and in the same way we might speak of the "dative of apparent separation" or the "dative implying separation."

The additions to our terminology on the side of the moods have been no less extensive, as will be seen by the table on pp. 257 and 258 of the Hale-Buck *Grammar*. I hope I may be pardoned for saying that this classification, clear as it unquestionably is, is a strong argument against the functional system, not on account of any lack of definiteness, but because it is quite out of the question that it should receive anything like general acceptance as a whole.

The time at my disposal does not allow me to go into further detail, and it really is not necessary to do so. Any teacher of Latin is familiar with the changes in our terminology, and the additions to it, which have been made within the last few decades. This is true, I think, even of the younger teachers, as a sufficient number of innovations have been made, since they began the study of Latin, to illustrate the point fully enough.

Whether the formal treatment as a whole can be made available for school purposes, or to what extent this can be done, or what influence it may have on a modification of functional classification, can be decided only when a great amount of preliminary work has been done. In fact, these questions practically throw the whole field of Latin syntax to a series of new investigations, which have the distinct

advantage that they may be carried without a knowledge of comparative grammar. That there are not a few writers whose syntax has not been made the object of special study is shown by the list in the third volume of the *Historical Latin Grammar*. In the case of those whose works have been so studied the work has commonly been done from the functional point of view, following the model set by Dräger in his *Historische Syntax der lateinischen Sprache*. There is therefore a real demand for monographs on the syntax of various writers, as well as on particular topics in Latin grammar. It must not be supposed that formal classification is a simple and mechanical process. On the contrary, it calls for much more thought and discrimination than the assignment of various cases, moods, or tenses to the pigeon-holes provided by Dräger, where the only difficulty is the occasional doubt as to the proper receptacle to choose. The work should be preceded by a careful reading of the literature of the subject, Professor Morris' book and the writers which he cites, and a careful examination of his basis of formal classification given on p. 196.

Those of us who have been brought up with the idea that the comparative method is the only proper one of approaching questions of language and literature must feel that our foundations are cut from beneath us, if Professor Morris' views on that subject are correct. There is no question, I think, that the explanation of the Latin ablative as a combination of the functions of the locative, ablative, and instrumental of an earlier period has brought order out of chaos, and made it easier to understand the uses of that difficult case. At the same time, it must be admitted that it is impossible with certainty to assign each use of the ablative to one of these three cases. One may readily, too, concede Professor Morris' contention that certain substantives on account of their meanings must have been without certain cases. We can hardly conceive of *gladius* as having been used in the locative, and hence in all probability it never had a locative; but this does not affect the existence of a locative case. We know that the ablative was originally of a very limited range and we may admit that the locative and the instrumental too were limited by the meanings of words. If, as Professor Morris contends, the progress of language has been in the direction of simplification

and definiteness of meaning and function, as the history of the modern languages seems to show, why should we on that account throw overboard our theory of the ablative? The instrumental, as it is now understood, combines such different ideas as association, accompaniment, and instrument—thereby differing from the simplicity of the ablative and the locative, which latter would be still further simplified if it were divided into a locative and a temporal. Hence the range of meaning of words which might have originally had an instrumental case is pretty wide, including not only *telum*, *gladium*, and the like, but *servus*, *vinum* (*miscebat mella Falerno*, Hor. *Sat.* ii. 4. 24), *pilum* (with *ludere*), *mulo* (with *ire*, Hor. *Sat.* i. 6. 105), *postico* (with *fallere*, Hor. *Epist.* i. 5. 31), *verbis* (with *miscere*, Hor. *Sat.* i. 10. 20). We even have it with personal names, as in *stipare Platona Menandro* (Hor. *Sat.* ii. 3. 11). If we are to indulge in speculation, and to pass beyond a period represented by any Indo-European language, we might infer that the primitive language had four or five cases which are represented in Latin by the ablative. Professor Hale's statement in the *Classical Journal*, that "it came to be seen that the parent language had eight cases," seems a little rash. Gottfried Hermann asserted that six was the maximum and minimum limit of conceivable cases, to be confuted by the discovery of Sanskrit with eight. Why may not the parent language possibly have had ten or even more cases? But I suspect that this very question would be regarded by Professor Morris as showing the truth of his general principle.

I must say that I am very skeptical about the idea that all the uses of a case are derived from one fundamental meaning, or from one or two such meanings. This seems to be contradicted by what we might infer about the psychology of primitive man, by the language of some barbarous nations, and by the general facts of language. The attempt to connect the various uses of the cases, as one reads them in Bennett and Delbrück, seem more ingenious than convincing. The parallelism of building a house with a tool (instrumental) and with a slave (association or accompaniment) is not very obvious, and one's sense of logic is subjected to much severer strains than this in the effort to reach a fundamental meaning.

It is even more startling—it seems almost sacrilege—to call in

question the current belief that the Latin subjunctive is a fusion of a primitive optative and subjunctive; yet the independent development of the uses of the subjunctive and the optative in Greek and Sanskrit and Latin would not be impossible or unparalleled. A supposed phonetic law of proethnic Italic was shown to have developed independently in Latin and in Osco-Umbrian by the form *sakros* in the archaic inscription recently found in the Roman Forum. How many of our theories might be overthrown by the discovery of a few more archaic inscriptions! In any case, it must be realized that the fundamental meanings attributed to the primeval subjunctive and optative are theoretical and not certain, and that there is not a little disagreement among scholars as to their nature. It seems to me that Professor Morris has made it clear that the grounds on which Professor Hale attributed a future force to the subjunctive were insufficient, and that the future force in such sentences as

Alter erit tum Tiphs, et altera quae vehat Argo
Delectos heroas (*Verg. Ed.* 4. 34).

does not lie in the subjunctive *vehat*.

Be these things as it may, it is a question whether the Latinist cannot render better service to his fellow-Latinists, and to the comparative philologists by furnishing them material for their work, by treating the facts of the Latin language as we have them. Certainly this offers an attractive field to those of us who are interested in the problems of syntax, but whose Sanskrit is becoming moth-eaten, and our Greek as well on account of the unfortunate separation of Latin and Greek which prevails in this country. The time seems to be coming when we shall have a breed of so-called Latinists who know no Greek at all *Di meliora!*

The new views on the subject of grammar are invading the contiguous field of lexicography. Here too we may make a distinction between the influence which formal classification has had on logical, which is marked and salutary, in the greater attention to the effect of context and other external influences on the meanings of words, and a purely formal classification. The two schools seem to be much nearer together in lexicography than in grammar. Dr. Wetmore a pupil of Morris', has recently discussed this subject in a Yale doctoral dissertation, entitled *The Plan and Scope of a Vergil Lexicon*.

For special lexicons the formal classification certainly offers great advantages, though even in the case of these it may be a fair question whether the province of a special lexicon is to furnish material for syntactical work, or to illustrate the semasiological development of a writer's language. For the former purpose an index might suffice. For a general lexicon a combination of the two methods, such as is followed in the main by the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*—though the large number of the collaborators and the frequent changes in the staff lead to inconsistencies in many points—seems to be the best. A *reductio ad absurdum* of the formal method is seen in the voluminous article on *ad*, covering about eighty-eight pages, or more than twenty-five times the limits originally set, in which we have such subdivisions as motion *ad fundum; de terrae partibus; ad urbem, oppidum; ad terram; ad litus, ad aquam; ad caelum; ad mortuorum sedes*. However convenient such a classification may be for some purposes of reference, it cannot be said to throw any particular light on the use of *ad* itself. It is, of course, true that in a logical classification there may be differences of opinion as to where a certain form or phrase should be put, and that an individual worker may himself be in doubt as to the proper disposal of his material. For example, whether *ab Ilio*, in the sentence *gens quae cremato fortis ab Ilio . . . pertulit Ausonias ad urbes* (*Hor. Carm.* iv. 53), is to be classed as local or as temporal is not easy to decide, and there is room for a difference of opinion. But if we take it as temporal, it is not easy to make this clear by a formal classification, since the temporal idea is contained, not in the word depending on *ab*, nor in the verb, nor in the accompanying *ad urbes*, all of which point the other way—for *ab* is used with *Ilio* even in purely temporal expressions—but in *cremato*.

In lexicography as in grammar, the question can be satisfactorily settled only by a great deal of patient preliminary investigation, in which we can all do our part. It is altogether probable that the decision will be in favor of a combination of the best features of the two methods, as indeed Professor Morris states. Above all, it seems to me essential that the adherents of the two schools should not raise their convictions to the dignity of a cult, and cry *abeste, abeste, profani* to all who do not agree with them. This is rarely done by the leaders

in such movements, but is not uncommon in their over-zealous pupils. Let us be open-minded and recognize the new light that is contributed by all new theories. Let us remember, too, that our forefathers were as confident of the truth of some of their theories, which are now demonstrably false, as we are of that of the beliefs of the present day, and that their names were as great in their own day as those of the leaders of the present. Above all, let us think, and train our students to think.